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ABSTRACT

The classes of one experienced teacher of English as a Second Language were observed over four months, using principles of naturalistic inquiry to obtain a holistic interpretation of the processes of language learning and instruction. Events in the classes were found to be related through the teacher's orchestration of student performance. This "performance" was realized through five distinct routines for practicing English, which established a common repertoire of rehearsal behaviors and shared knowledge. The routines included: (1) choral practice; (2) complex recitations involving written texts, spoken exchanges, linguistic analyses, and paradigmatic examples; (3) ensemble practice; (4) guided improvisation; and (5) independent practice. The value of the routines is assessed in view of their potential to foster experiential learning and problem-solving behaviors appropriate to students preparing for academic studies in the second language. (Author/MSE)

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The Orchestration of ESL Performance'

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1. I am especially grateful to the teacher and students who permitted me to "attend their performances". I thank Claude Germain and Jacques Rebuffot for discussing this research in progress, as well as Merrill Swain, Patrick Allen and Lee Gunderson for commenting on an earlier draft.

The Orchestration of ESL Performance

The classes of one experienced ESL teacher were observed over four months, using principles of naturalistic inquiry to obtain a holistic interpretation of the processes of language instruction and learning in the one situation. Events in the classes were found to cohere through a central metaphor: the teacher's "orchestrating student performance". This was realized through five distinct routines for practicing English, which established a common repertoire of rehearsal behaviors and shared knowledge. Their value is assessed in view of their potential to foster experiential learning and problem solving behaviors appropriate to students preparing for academic studies in their second language.

Breen (1985) and Allwright (1988) have proposed that research on classroom language learning needs to understand, more fully, the social and cognitive complexity of participating in second language instruction. To date, research on second language teaching and learning has largely been conceived within a framework of input-output specifications (Long 1980). This has attempted to calculate the frequency of certain teaching behaviors (as inputs) then to match their correspondence to later assessments of student achievement (as outputs). Though valuable in developing normative models for a range of classroom behaviors (Chaudron 1988), this approach necessarily reduces the multiplicity of experience which appears, intuitively, to characterize particular instances of classroom activity. It also tends to obscure the relations between teaching and learning as reciprocal processes contributing to the social and mental construction of knowledge.

The present study set out to explore alternative insights from a more holistic perspective on the processes of ESL teaching and learning in a particular case. A single teacher and her students were observed at intervals over a four-month period in two ESL classes at a Canadian university. The teacher was initially identified by her program administrator as an exemplary instructor, with extensive ESL experience. She volunteered to

have her classes observed, being told only that the purpose of the research was to develop a better understanding of communicative language teaching as it was actually practiced. Students in the classes were young adults with a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. One class was designated as an "advanced level" course, focused on academic skills for ESL students beginning programs at the university. The other class was designated as an "intermediate level" conversation course, one component in an intensive ESL program aimed at developing general language proficiency prior to university admission.

The study followed principles of naturalistic inquiry (Eisner 1985, Lincoln and Guba 1985, Merriam 1988), aiming to document the phenomena perceived to "emerge" in the one context and to interpret their educational value. This involved open-ended observation in the classes, extensive note-taking, reflective analysis of the phenomena recorded and observed, and consolidation of interpretations through the preparation of narrative accounts of key events. A fundamental understanding of three issues was aimed for: what were people doing? how was this organized? what value might it possess? Tentative interpretations were corroborated over the series of observations, then reassessed informally with the teacher involved, after the observation period -- through discussion of findings and her reading of an earlier version of the present paper.

The findings are particular to the one situation, and one reasoned interpretation of it. Nonetheless, certain findings resemble those obtained independently in Campbell's (1986) ethnographic study of bilingual ESL/mathematics classes in the Phillipines, as well as those suggested in Breen's (1985) argument that ESL classrooms be interpreted like Malinkowski's metaphor of culture as a "coral garden" (1935). The interpretations reached in the present study are also consonant with the findings of related case-study, observational,

ethnographic, ethnomethological, phenomenological, or applied cognitive science research in other educational settings:

- What were people doing? people were engaged in a specialized kind of performance ritual (McLaren 1986, Campbell 1986), prompting the systematic engagement of participants in interactions directed through the instructor's practical knowledge for teaching (Elbaz 1983, Clandinin 1986);

- How were events organized? classroom events were sequenced as progressive, interrelated routines, adroitly initiated and sustained by the instructor -- each routine seeking to maintain the attention and involvement of students at varied levels of interpretation, communication and action (Doyle 1983, Green 1983, Langer and Applebee 1987, Leinhardt, Weidman and Hammond 1987, Nespor 1987);

- What value might the events possess? classroom events presented the potential for learning through students' continuous interpretation, assessment, and production of interconnected procedural (Karmiloff-Smith 1979), integrative (Leinhardt and Putnam 1987) and self-regulatory (Bereiter and Scardamalia, in press) knowledge -- developing their assuredness to think and act with a "cultural logic" appropriate to classroom behavior in their second language (Campbell 1986, Heap 1985).

1 Orchestrating Language Performance

Classroom events cohered through a central metaphor or image, shaping personal and social actions and conceptions. ESL instruction was enacted as the skillful "orchestration of student performance". The teacher functioned much like a conductor leading a band in rehearsal, eliciting students' behaviors within

a repertoire of routines for communication "practice", interpreting the value and accuracy of the communication produced according to a "canon" of linguistic and cultural knowledge, and suggesting ways to enact them as improved performance. The metaphor of "orchestrating student performance", willfully adhered to by teacher and students alike, served to unify, direct and fulfill experiences through a framework for purposeful, ritual-like behaviors (cf. Clandinin 1986, Lakoff and Johnson 1981, Mclaren 1986).

The nature of the metaphor, and its effectiveness in shaping classroom actions, combined diverse but related conceptions. In terms of second language pedagogy, it realized the widely-advocated goal (Widdowson 1978, Krashen and Terrell 1983, Canale 1983) of developing students' linguistic "performance" (Chomsky 1965) through language use and communication. In view of social dynamics, the teacher's "orchestration" of activity set out principles for regulating, subtly and artfully, the patterns of verbal turn-taking, attention, and behavior conventional to classroom settings -- by building on notions of "practice", "rehearsal", or "refinement" directed at students becoming more proficient "players" of specific routines (Mehan 1979, Doyle 1983, Cazden 1986).

But the particular metaphor of "ESL instruction as orchestrating student performance" must be seen to derive from the teacher's personal knowledge and experiences. As an image used as a practical principle for organizing classroom events and curriculum decisions (Clandinin 1986, Elbaz 1983), it appeared to inform the artfulness and effectiveness of her approach to ESL teaching. The universality of routines for musical rehearsal may be a suitable basis for unifying the expectations for classroom behavior of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in ESL classes. Claude Germain (personal communication) has suggested how other universally-applicable metaphors appear to dominate certain French as a second language classes he has observed. For instance, a teacher may "coach

students" like athletes in a team sport -- setting learners up in group activities, then urging them on to more effective interactions and linguistic performance while they proceed.

2 Rehearsing English

Five routines for "rehearsing" English were observed, in varied forms, throughout the classes. Each routine appeared to be rooted in an analogy of musical performance. Collectively, they constituted a fixed repertoire for regular "practice" of the language. One routine was "choral practice", a procedure commonly prescribed in ESL teaching methodologies (e.g. Paulston and Bruder 1976). The second (and most prevalent) routine was the collective analysis and "recitation of exercises". These revealed a "symphonic" complexity, highlighting inter-related themes of language and meaning, processes of thinking and communication, as well as simultaneous interpretation of written texts and spoken discourse. The third routine was "ensemble" practice, where students performed common tasks in small groups. The fourth routine was "guided improvisation", where one student led informal discussion among the class members, which was supervised by the teacher's correction and prompting. The fifth routine, "independent practice", was most commonly assigned as homework, and therefore seldom observed directly.

These routines were "orchestrated" by the teacher in sequences of 10 to 20 minutes duration, marked by framing devices signaling their beginning ("Okay, now, let's look at exercise G") and end points ("Okay, enough of that one. You've done that pretty well."). Each possessed an autonomous tempo, usually set by the teacher's discourse but fulfilled through corresponding roles adopted by participating students. Collectively, the routines realized a script planned in advance by the teacher, which drew on patterns of behaviors previously established among participants, specific topics for language study, and participants' sense of communal purpose. The routines

were interrelated thematically (synchronically and diachronically), building progressively into a network of interconnected, shared knowledge. Overall, they gave the impression that the class was literally "practicing" English like canonical tunes. But the routines were jointly realized -- open to diverse realizations, requiring each members' active engagement in order to fulfill the "conductor's" plan and the participants' expectations for a consummate performance.

2.1 Choral Practice

The teacher's "orchestrating of student performance" was most conspicuous in sequences of choral practice. These tended to focus on the learning of formulaic phrases and accurate pronunciation:

> Teacher hands out photocopied sheets (resembling a musical score) to students. She introduces a theme to the activity: "Now, there are some questions that we don't like to answer. What do you not want to ask a person in public?" A student quickly replies, "age". "Yes. Can you think of any others?" Several students propose marital status, religion, and so on; the class is warming up to the activity. The tempo of interchanges quickens. The teacher announces, "another is about money. You really shouldn't ask about money. That's the first example on the sheet. This is a little practice about what to say when you don't want to say something. You can repeat it line by line after me." Reading in chorus, all emphatically repeat phrases of the pattern, "How much is your pay? I'd rather not say. How much do you weigh? I'd rather not say."
>
> When the tempo lulls, the teacher suggests modifications to the performance: "We're not going to say did you. We're going to say didja, because that's what people say." A few vocabulary items are quickly defined. A moment later, a layer of rhythm is added to the rehearsing: "Can everybody snap!" The class begins to snap fingers to the tempo set by the teacher. The room takes on the air of a revival meeting, chanting phrases loudly, snapping fingers to the beat. Minor improvements are proposed to intersentential segmentations, evident to the teacher's trained ear:

"Most English speakers would slur these words." "No, 'weren't' is only one syllable."

Then the class is divided into two groups -- to alternate questions and responses: "Okay, now we'll do it half and half." The teacher swings across the room, conducting the recitation of phrases between groups like a choral leader. "Okay, let's do it the other way around. Ah, 1, ah, 2, ah, 3..." The sequence closes with telling praise: "Good. You could go to Carnegie Hall with more practice!"

2.2 Orchestral Recitations

A second, more frequent, and more cognitively-demanding routine involved the interplay of written texts, spoken exchanges, linguistic analyses, and paradigmatic examples. This was symphonic in its complexity, interweaving verbal ("Listen carefully now."), linguistic ("What's the main verb?"), textual ("Read this example again.") and cognitive ("Does it make sense to you?") harmonies. The teacher artfully interposed the four, drawing students' attention to their inter-relatedness, while simultaneously maintaining attention to the continuity of each:

The class has settled into position for the beginning of the lesson, arranging itself like an orchestra, in a semi-circle around the conductor. Students partition themselves, culturally, like the string, woodwind and brass sections in a band: 5 Asian women mutter softly in the center; 4 Latino males jeer at each other loudly on one wing of the semi-circle; 7 Europeans cluster disjointedly at the other end of the arc. A German fellow moves his chair closer to his "fellow players", as if realizing he had mistakenly sat too close to the middle of the room.

"Okay, now, I will get into the work we did the other day. I'm going to take you over the examples. Do you all have your books? Can you find them?" A shuffle through bags and papers, as students bring out their versions of the "musical score". They prop their books onto the podium-like desks in front of them. The rehearsal can begin.

The teacher begins, rapidly writing model sentences on the blackboard, fervently expounding them. She

establishes a steady lyric that animates the room. Students' eyes shift between blackboard, their papers, and the teacher. They listen to the music of the teacher's discourse, attuning themselves to the progressions of written texts, language rules, and their own thoughts. They seem to be waiting for signals to improvise on one of the themes -- rehearsing melodies of syntax, semantics and logic in their heads.

"Now look at the exercises in the book." For each item in the exercise, the teacher coaxes the students until someone is compelled to respond: "What is the logical construction? Come on. It's not too hard. What does it mean? What's happening in number 3? Can you see the parallel construction? It's an interesting one. Can you figure it out? Why? Technically, what happens in this one? Does it make sense to you?" Attention is directed at the simultaneous (yet divergent) harmonies of language, sense, rhetoric, and discourse.

The teacher's discourse is sequential and rapid. But it regularly leaves a pregnant space for one or two other players to enter, hesitantly, incited to complete the elaborating melody. The teacher leads the verbal dimensions of the performance. But the real music is mental music. It is the dizzy tunes of students thinking, listening, reading, analyzing paradigms, mumbling under their breath to themselves -- matching sense, text, talk, language and actions. Some frantically write notes, trying to transcribe the essence of the music. Others follow the tune by ear, registering its intricacies mentally.

When the tempo is established, students are invited to pick up the verbal tune. Called upon, they oblige: "Suzanne, will you do this one?" They are praised for their performance: "Yes, that sounds very nice. Very nice." Or they join in counter-point, challenging an example, attempting a solo performance of the questioning tune that the teacher has hitherto maintained. A student may try to perform the grammar theme: "Shouldn't that have a `would' in that sentence? Like the other one?" Alternatively, there are inquiries about meaning: "I don't understand where it says `might is right'." These interjections build on the conductor's persistent instructions to attend closely to her grammar ("Is that right? Is that how it's written?") or for individuals to exercise their substantive knowledge ("This one is about economics. Come on, all of you commerce students, try this one. Does that make sense? Is it reasonable?"). The sequence finishes with appeals to contentment: "Is everybody happy with those double correlatives? Fine then, we'll move on to the next one."

2.3 Ensemble Practice

In these routines, students were formed into small groups to perform a set piece collectively. Some of these routines followed a model conveyed in previous teacher-directed tasks. Others developed from individual practice done earlier as homework:

> The teacher lists (on the blackboard) 5 points of rhetorical development to be identified in a reading passage. Shuffling and chattering, the students scrape their chairs across the floor into circles of 4s and 5s. The sounds are diverse, like a band tuning its instruments. The teacher attends carefully to the arranging of groups: "You can move or mix around. Okay, you two ladies, over here. It's better if you work with someone who has done the same reading as you. Let's make a group here in the center."
>
> The room comes to buzz with meaningful inquiry. Students read, mutter, proposing, checking and backchecking interpretations -- searching mentally, visually, and verbally for meanings. Their eyes rivet on the reading passage, but also dart up to the model sentences on the blackboard or glance at a neighbor. The discourse is persistent. At first, it is fragmented: "So, what's the conclusion?" "Do we have to write this down?" "Is this one right?" Some phrases mimic those used earlier by the teacher. But these are signs of inquiry, not elicitation, so there is little continuity to the talk.
>
> Each person puzzles through the task -- at once an individual player, but at the same time "performing" in an ensemble. The teacher listens, pacing around the room, assisting individuals where they seem to require "arranging" or "harmonizing". Grammar, logic and rhetoric are the embellishments she provides. Gradually, individuals come to assert their versions of the tunes, leading their ensemble in a certain harmony: "I think it is the major assertion here, in the second sentence. He says his main ideas. It's an implication of our everyday life."
>
> When the tempo of voices has become routine, less divergent, the teacher re-establishes her role as ochestrator: "Okay, I think we'll just report to the class. Okay, what was the importance of the assertion in this one? Okay. Listen. Steven. Ah, these ladies over here." Progressively, she draws attention to one

authoritative interpretation of each task. The varied interpretations that the groups have reached are valorized against the blackboard models. One interpretation is established, fixed as the "standard" version of the tune, endorsed by the teacher/conductor: "Do we all agree on that?"

2.4 Guided Improvisation

Routines of guided improvisation asked students to communicate impromptu in a well-defined task. As they performed, the teacher stood outside the arena of activity, correcting or embellishing the performance in progress. Usually, a simple pattern of discourse was maintained by the students, as in the question-answer exchanges in the example below. The teacher attended carefully to the evolving performance, suggesting minor improvements whenever she sensed a glaring infelicity:

> "Okay, who wants to go into the hot seat today?" the teacher calls out, scanning the room. "Anne, how about you? We'll need some quick questions here. People, what questions will you ask?"
>
> Within seconds, Anne seats herself at the front of the room, and students from all corners start to voice concerns. Anne responds harmoniously, pitching her reply to each tune played to her: "What did you do last night?" "I went to bed early." The teacher remains out of visual perspective, drawing attention to the verbal aspects of the emerging improvisations. Someone asks, "what bring you to Canada?" The teacher politely denounces the verbal phrase, "what brought you!", then allows the question to be answered. Another asks, "how many times have you been in Canada?". This is rapidly modified by the voice from the rear of the room, "How long, Mohamed!"
>
> This flow of discourse is maintained, while all attend to its accuracy. The substance of the talk between students dwells on shared knowledge, tunes they already know well: "Did you hurt yourself on the weekend?" "Yes, I injured my leg. I can't stand up." But attention is drawn to the accuracy of the tunes being played: "I couldn't stand up, Anne! You can stand up now." The melodies performed are free variations on old standards, the phrasing of which all are expected

to know. If not, grammatical harmony is added unwaveringly to each.

2.5 Independent Practice

Independent practice was mainly assigned as homework exercises, many of which were subsequently reviewed in the class in routines of "orchestral recitation" or "ensemble practice". On some occasions, writing or reading activities were practiced briefly during the classes. The teacher specified explicitly how students were to proceed on the tasks, noting consistently that their purpose was "practice". These were often interspersed with routines of "orchestral recitation", as in the following example:

> The value of previewing, as a reading skill in academic studies, is introduced as the theme for the sequence. Following a textbook model, the teacher recites procedures for skimming a text. She then announces, "I would like you to practice this right now. Take 3 minutes, and do it with the article on page 40. Then tell me what you know from the previewing." Everyone sets about reading, exaggerating the movements of their eyes, heads and hands. The teacher ensures all are on-task, matching up one student, who has forgotten his book, with his neighbor. She surveys the room, finding someone underlining phrases: "Keiko, don't underline on this read! This is just previewing."
>
> "Okay, that's 3 minutes." The practice period has passed. It is followed by a barrage of recitation questions: "What's the title of the article? The source? Is it current? Okay, what's it about?" Once these are answered, a second melody is added to the reading theme: "Let's pretend you all decide to read more carefully. At this stage you might do some underlining." The teacher reviews procedures for reading to extract information.
>
> One student is called upon to perform solo. "First, let's read it aloud, the 1st paragraph. This will be good practice for you, Louise. Read the whole thing." As she reads, occasional mispronunciations are corrected. Other students interject questions about

vocabulary. Then all are told to engage in another sequence of practice: "Go ahead and underline, on page 40 and the top paragraph on 41. Just practice it for a few minutes." Moments later, a second instruction is added, "I forgot to tell you to circle the words you just can't understand in the context." Progressively, the practice session builds into the symphonic complexity characterizing "recitation" routines -- interrelating language, meaning, and individual performance.

2.6 When the Music Stops

The pervasive "orchestration" of these routines was especially notable when it ceased momentarily. Attention, usually directed at particular themes and actions, would diffuse. The heightened state of involvement in rehearsal would vanish, leaving all unsure of how to proceed. This occurred during unexpected interruptions:

> Midway through a "recitation" routine, a lanky Arab appears at the door. He stands there until the teacher's voice drops and eyes cast his way. "I can't find my class," he explains. "It's changed." The teacher looks around then decides to lead him off to his appropriate location. There is an unnatural silence in the room... No one knows what to do, or say, or even where to look. There is no orchestrator, no music. The teacher returns moments later, and the harmony of English practice enlivens the room again.

Alternatively, in a few instances when students had not prepared adequately for their performance, the teacher's plans for rehearsal would fall through:

> "I'd like you to look at this little argument on football scholarships. I asked you to underline the arguments in there. Did you do it? Anyone? No? Too bad, it's a good exercise. Am I the only one who has?" It becomes obvious that the routine planned for is now impossible. Not sure of what to say, several male students pose questions about the university's football team -- its achievements and qualities. As they do, the potential for organized rehearsal fizzles out. The orchestral discourse diverges into "real" talk. There is no task to practice, no shared knowledge developed

from previous rehearsals, and no particular authority in the teacher's responses to the questions. The other students in the room are conspicuously disoriented and uninterested. They gaze idly around the room, pulling their hair, rummaging among their belongings. This is no longer classroom language learning.

3 Instantiating the Melodies

The routines were not simply isolated sequences. They built progressively and ritualistically upon one another, varying slightly in their demands, yet repeating their regularities. They were carefully interposed and cross-referenced -- topically, behaviorally, linguistically and cumulatively -- creating a mutual basis of interdependent knowledge and patterns for interaction. This consistently engaged students, animating them in the behaviors characteristic of successful classroom learning: attentive questioning, cooperative interaction, analytic problem solving, and the self-confident structuring of discourse. This developed as a larger, intricate rhythm which "orchestrated" the movement of lessons, tasks, and classes over the period of the courses.

3.1 Building Up the Tempo

Much thematic interrelating of the routines was achieved through reference to common topics over the period of several classes. For example, one week-long series of routines focused on Shaw's Pygmalion and the musical film version of it, My Fair Lady:

- Routines of "independent practice" centered on individuals reading the play, as homework, and viewing the film in class.

- Routines of "ensemble practice" developed through groups of students generating and comparing answers to teacher-prepared questions about the play's characters, story-line and social significance.

- Routines of "guided improvisation" and "choral practice" were interspersed during the reading-aloud of sections of the play.

- Routines of "orchestral recitation" focused on vocabulary items and questions of interpretation in selected passages.

In this way, the play created a long-term focus for collaborative interpretation and performance. The personal interpretations reached during individuals' reading of the play and viewing of the film built up a framework of common knowledge upon which students were able to exchange their views and debate their classroom roles during "ensemble practice":

> "No, this say was he selfish or not?" "But, he was selfish. He was dealing with Eliza very hard. You remember the scene of the party? And after the professor and his friend talk." "But she could change anything he wants." "Maybe he didn't have a good experience about the ladies." "No, the ladies could do whatever they want." "I agree with everybody." "Oh, don't be like, ah, Peter!"

> "What about number 9?" "What's happen at the end? I didn't understand. Why did he change?" "He gives 5 pounds to him. In the end, he writes a letter. He makes a joke. Yeah." "I miss all that." "Did you read the book? All the book? All?"

But it was in the routines of "guided improvisation", "choral practice" and "orchestral recitation" where performance was most carefully "orchestrated". These routines developed during readings of the text of the play. Students were assigned characters' roles to read aloud, while the teacher elaborated the routines which made these events into language practice. These would begin as "guided improvisation" with students freely

performing their roles. But the teacher would draw attention to aspects of individual performance while the reading proceeded:

> Okay, Clara, you're going to take a deep breath. I want them to hear you in the corner. We want some volume.
>
> That's "vowels", not "bowels".
>
> Excuse me, it's "women". One "woman", two "women".

As the reading-aloud progressed, the teacher listed words on the blackboard which proved to pose problems for pronunciation: "awfully, influenza, sniggering, ladling, drank, dreadful, rotters". She then stopped the readings to lead the class in a routine of "choral practice", emphasizing the syllable stress and vowel qualities of each word:

> "Sniggering". It's a short "e". Now make your mouth smile. Now let it relax. Keep it relaxed. Don't smile.

When the reading-aloud resumed, a theme of semantics was added to the elaborating melody:

> "Witty". It means funny.
>
> "Small talk" means the trivial things we say at parties.
>
> He says he is going to "pass her off as a duchess". What does that mean? A few students venture possible synonyms: "change"? "try"? "make people think"?. The teacher replies, yes, "to make people think". When you give some counterfeit money to people, you try to pass it off. Is there any other vocabulary? You should mark them as you go along.

Gradually, these routines would take on the complexity of "orchestral recitations", attention being drawn to the multiple interrelations of language, meaning, and action.

The larger "melody" to the classes was also structured in reference to other common topics, such as points of grammar. Continuity was established within a framework which was explicitly backward-looking and forward-looking. Backward

references -- to previous behaviors, topics and materials -- served as the departure point for introducing new routines:

> Look at the examples on page 118 that I asked you to do for homework. Tell if you had any problems with them. Otherwise, I'm just going to choose some that are good to practice.
>
> Yesterday, in the lab, we were practicing the verbs with "ed" endings. Remember them? Well, I have noticed lots of problems with your spelling of them in the compositions. They are very well outlined in your book on page 211. You can follow on that page.
>
> I brought in a new example for this one, so nobody gets mixed up. The one yesterday was not good. Let's try this one instead.

Likewise, forward references to future classes or homework tasks closed most routines. These specified clearly where "performance" was to begin in following days, or they proposed that students complete certain routines, on their own, outside the classroom:

> Finish it please for homework. Keep going with that chapter. In fact, I will just assign pages 78 A and 79 B. You have your essays to hand in. There is an exercise in the module. Exercise L. Pass it in to me by monday. Bring back your questions for that day.
>
> I'll just remind you to bring a photo of yourself, for tomorrow, with lots of action to describe, so you can say a lot. Your presentations will start tomorrow with Remi. Then Lin. Everybody will make an oral presentation.
>
> This is the homework. Read it and circle the vocabulary. Set yourself a time limit. Take no more than one hour to do this.

The timing of classroom "performance" also served to shape the larger tempo of the routines. The teacher carefully paced each routine so as to be brief enough to sustain and vary involvement within the fixed period of the classes. She highlighted the importance of timing for most routines:

After you finish this, you can stop. Then we can have coffee. The sooner you finish, the sooner you can have coffee.

Are most people finished? Let's go ahead anyway. Just say what you did, because of the length of time.

Oh, my goodness, it's almost time to go. Okay, that's enough of that. We'll move onto the next one. There isn't too much time left.

3.2 Performing Linguistic Transformations

"Performing" the linguistic dimensions of English became, in one curious way, a specialized feature of classroom talk. Much of the teacher's explicit talk about language tended to anthropomorphize it, referring to English as a changeable, living entity:

It's very versatile. You have to give credit to English. It can take a noun and put it wherever it wants.

What is the mistake here? It says "18 years old boy". Yes. "18 year old boy". It has become an adjective. And we don't pluralize adjectives. The noun has become an adjective.

What's the difference in this sentence? "There is", "there are". It agrees with whatever follows it.

Instead of an infinitive phrase, it has become an appositive. This verb has become a noun. And this adjective becomes an adverb.

That's a lovely German expression you have produced. But in English we have to use that auxiliary, our old friend.

This tendency to endow language with its own powers of agency was coupled with an ongoing "invitation" for students to perform in English on similar terms. Viewing language as malleable, susceptible to transformations, designated it as something students were capable of rendering in their own speech

performance. This became an explicit objective for the teacher's eliciting student participation in recitation routines:

> Nominalization means when you change a verb phrase to an abstract noun. How can we nominalize this? How are you going to change that?
>
> Okay, ready, Tina. Okay. Try it. Just try it. You're going to start with, "Not only..." Try to pluralize the antecedent.
>
> How do we make the past in this one? To make the past, what do we do? What do we do with the present?
>
> No, try harder. Some subordinators won't become propositions all that easily.
>
> Okay, what are we going to use here? Which of these correlatives? Would you like to try it, Fumio?

This "life" instilled in language put an onus on students to be responsible for putting that life to work, to perform with it. All important to this conception, however, was the notion that there are <u>appropriate</u> transformations of syntax, at which students should become progressively more adept through orchestrated practice. The origins of this logic in theories of transformational-generative grammar is possible. However, it more likely derives from ordinary talk about the technicalities of language, used artfully here to perpetuate the larger metaphor guiding classroom behavior. This was evident in other instances where language was routinely discussed as socially permissible actions. For instance, a student asked, "Can we say one information, or do we say some information?" to which the teacher responded, "We say some information. It's an uncountable noun. We don't count it."

3.3 Interpreting the Performance

The teacher frequently used her knowledge of the rules of grammar, logic, rhetoric, semantics and cultural appropriateness as a kind of canon to interpret and refine students'

"performance". Interestingly, though, her purposes for invoking this knowledge did not appear to be to transmit it wholesale to the class. The delivery of this information was more like an aside to the main events, being so technically-worded, or so rapidly or softly spoken, that it could not have been intended to be comprehended fully by the students. Instead, this knowledge appeared to serve as a code to which the teacher referred when rationalizing her direction of the students' performance. The teacher, like a band conductor who couldn't know quite how to implement the exactitudes of her "score" until she heard her band members perform, waited for students "to play their parts" -- by speaking or writing out assignments -- so that she was able to approve, suggest improvements, or point out infidelities. Her possession of a specialized terminology was used like rules of musical harmony, whose subtleties endorsed her authority for orchestrating the performance.

Even on occasions where linguistic usage was explicitly the theme of a lesson, it was treated as a means for enacting performance routines, rather than as a goal for learning in its own right:

> The teacher distributes a sheet displaying 10 sentences selected from students' compositions. The goal is to "spot and correct errors". The teacher identifies a sentence to be analyzed. Students read it quickly, puzzling over its sense (now isolated from its context) -- but more importantly, the point and source of inaccuracy. The teacher prompts students to respond: "Okay, what's wrong here? What's wrong with this one? Emmanuel, do you know? What is it? Come on. What's wrong?" He ventures an answer. "No, it's the verb. It needs an auxiliary. Just before the main verb. Does everybody have that?" And so on, through the 10 sentences: "Okay, look for another problem. Sentence number 2. What's wrong?"

Such routines would soon develop into "orchestral recitations", drawing attention to the ambiguities of language, meaning and discourse, rather than strict linguistic analyses. Indeed, their purposes would vascillate between a wide range of criteria for improving students' performance:

A student suggests there is a problem with the verb tense, "are going", in one sentence. But the teacher's response reveals that the salient error is in word choice: "It's the "nice" I object to. But it's the "nice" I object to. It's very vague. Try to think of something more original and specific." In a later sentence, normative usage proves to be the point of the exercise. The word "behaviors" is identified as inaccurate and so is changed to the singular, along with its accompanying verb ("have" to "has"). A student quickly retorts, "Can't you put "behaviors" in the plural? I've seen it in my psychology books." The teacher's reply asserted her authority, "Maybe they do that in the Psychology Department. But it's new and unusual to me. It isn't normal. Some people might do it. But I don't."

The semantics of these routines were characterized by a generative ambiguity, resembling the dialogue of characters in a Harold Pinter play. The teacher persistently invited multiple interpretations to complex dilemmas, asking that students attend to and consolidate divergent notions:

"What does it mean?" "Does this make sense to you?" "Is that reasonable?" Then a moment later...

"You're supposed to just look at the technical form. Not the meaning. I think you're being very sensible to worry about meaning. But the form of it is wrong. We want to look just at the form."

4 Participating in the Performance

What was the point of orchestrating student performance in these ways? Why would the teacher so deliberately and artfully set about organizing her classes in this manner? Why would students engage in these activities with evident enthusiasm and satisfaction? The classroom routines were directed, fundamentally, at prompting students to perform more effectively as students in their second language. The goals of the lessons were improved classroom performance -- becoming better able to think, act, talk, interpret, read and write, while attending to a

teacher, working with text materials, and collaborating with classmates. Rather than the substantive content of individual lessons being of primary importance as specific knowledge, the value of the lessons lay primarily in the processes of their performance.

Students were rehearsing the roles of being students in English-medium academic classes -- becoming "literate" in the culture and tasks of appropriate classroom discourse (Heap 1985, Campbell 1986, Mohan 1986). Given students' long-term objectives of pursuing academic studies at an English-medium university, this process would appear to be relevant preparation. As a "second language" class aiming at integration into a specific culture, its processes contrast with (1) conventional "subject matter" instruction, where the transmission of information predominates, or (2) "foreign language" instruction, where abstract analyses of a language are presented and practiced.

4.1 Becoming More Proficient Players

The routines put student performance in the foreground of classroom activity. Their regularity defined a limited set of familiar behaviors, permitting learners the flexibility to practice, try out, and develop ways of acting appropriately as students in their second language. But at the same time, the variations and interrelations in the routines posed ongoing challenges, new orientations, and the need for adjustment and development. As the classes progressed, they established a knowledge-base for interrelating the processes of classroom performance, which in themselves became the objective of learning.

The practical significance of the metaphor of "orchestrating student performance" can be seen to provide a socially motivating, coherent and pervasive means for bringing about a transition to new ways of acting, thinking, and using language:

> the crucial use of metaphor is in moving from one conceptual scheme with its associated way of knowing to another conceptual scheme with its associated way of knowing. (Petrie 1979, p. 460)

The metaphor and its routines provided a participatory framework which was accessible to all (regardless of different language, cultural or academic backgrounds). As students became involved in the routines, their performance became its substance. Conversely, they learned experientially how to act within its parameters, parameters which the teacher progressively directed toward the kinds of behaviors characteristic of effective academic performance in English.

The assessment of student achievement was even conducted in terms which put a premium on the processes of performance, irrespective of substantive content or personal expression:

> I'll remind you that there's a mid-term test on Thursday. It will include some error correction, and some work identifying the topic sentences of a paragraph. I may do a little dictation as well, so brush up on your spelling.
>
> I will tell you something about the test. I want you all to do a good job. You will have to write an outline for an essay. The subject is noise pollution. I will give you some information, facts, figures, statistics, quotations. But if you have any ideas of your own, gather them up, and bring them with you. You will have a choice of rhetorical styles. But argument will be the main one. I will ask for one footnote, so I can check your style. I will give you the information to put in it.

The extent of students' acceptance of these routines was such that they came to perceive their learning of English within its terms. Before some classes or during breaks, I asked students how they were learning English. Their responses were invariably to pull out an exercise book and point to its contents, as if it was a musical piece they were rehearsing. Alternatively, they would cite tasks in which they were engaged

in the classes, explaining how they had prepared a specific performance for that day.

4.2 Synthesizing the Harmonies

What kinds of learning were these processes fostering? Three answers to this question seem plausible. In large measure, learning appeared to be experiential. It derived from active, repeated participation in similar behaviors. Students practiced a fixed set of procedures under variable conditions, mastering them to the extent that they were no longer problematic, their behaviors becoming more efficient within a range of increasingly predictable circumstances (Karmiloff-Smith 1979, Pellegrino and Glaser 1982). This learning might facilitate processes of social reproduction, providing a supportive transition into the culture of schooling in English (McLaren 1986). However, on its own, this learning would not appear sufficient to foster development beyond that of attaining confidence in the prescribed classroom routines themselves (Doyle 1983).

A second kind of learning appeared to be integrative. This required that knowledge obtained from different sources, routines and events be brought together, assessed and incorporated into effective performance (Leinhardt and Putnam 1987). This would be a long-term, accumulative process. However, it is not a process which would be easily achieved through individual effort in these circumstances, since classroom activities were fragmented into brief routines and had little substantive content to analyze, compile or assimilate.

The third (and most intriguing) potential for learning appeared in the active problem solving behaviors visibly elicited in "orchestration routines". This involved the cognitively-demanding act of rapidly attending to multiple aspects of communication, purpose and situation. During the height of these routines, students were attending simultaneously to: the

teacher's continuous discourse, written explanations and examples in exercise books, written explanations and examples on the blackboard, their own notes, explicit analyses of language, their own performance, their peers' performance, and their own thoughts (including interpretations about the situation, speculation on appropriate responses to questions, and the substantive relations of the task at hand to other tasks). Their attention appeared riveted to all of these elements, shifting between various layers of them, but intent on deciding what was significant and interrelated. This behavior called for extraordinary self-regulation amid an obvious potential for confusion.

Participation in this process required a mental and verbal balancing act difficult to sustain in a second language (Faerch 1985) -- matching divergences, correspondences, and multiplicities far exceeding those demanded by ordinary discourse. It called for a fine tuning of attention, a fluency in verbal and interpretive skills, as well as a constant self-regulatory goal of accounting for the full array of linguistic, social, psychological and ideational elements co-occurring in the situation. This appeared possible because the patterns of engagement (developed in previous routines) had established a stable organization of participatory involvement "scaffolded" to the teacher's discourse, text materials and thematic content. Separate routines had developed attention to individual effort (through "independent practice"), linguistic accuracy (through "guided improvisation"), collaborative effort (through "ensemble practice"), and unified action (through "choral practice"). When brought together in the complexity of "orchestral recitations", these practiced behaviors invoked a heightened cognitive activity focused on the integrated performance of diverse behaviors.

This kind of orchestrated, participatory problem solving suggests a very different image of classroom language learning than is proposed by simple formulae of comprehending "input" (Krashen 1982), or even the processing of "intake" (Chaudron 1988). Above and beyond learners' reception and production of

language, they were prompted to engage continuously in an analytic synthesis of the diverse components in the communication situation. While sustaining their positions in the discourse, learners were required to treat its multiple elements as a "text" (Olson 1977) to be scrutinized, rehearsed and refined -- a text which was perforce of their own performance. This would necessitate developing capacities to attend to additional aspects of a situation, such as generally characterize processes of intellectual development (Case 1985).

Becoming better able to use this kind of problem solving in a second language may be integral to thinking analytically, above and beyond the demands of verbal participation in a second language. Its acquisition would permit students to learn from and to think critically about classroom events and content, while at the same time learning experientially to participate appropriately in them (Bereiter and Scardamalia, in press). Problem solving behaviors demanding the self-regulation of analytic thought are rarely necessary in the familiar contexts and flexible exchanges of conversational interaction. But they may be crucial to developing the cognitive-academic language proficiency required for successful performance with decontextualized subject matter in a second language (Cummins and Swain 1986).

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